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INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS BANGKOK 003979

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PACOM FOR MAJOR CHAMNESS (J52)
JCS FOR CDR CHASE (J5)
OSD FOR LTC REDMOND (OSD POLICY)
STATE FOR EAP - DAS ERIC JOHN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL MOPS TH

SUBJECT: MISSION VIEWS ON TWO TOP THAI GENERALS' PROPOSED
U.S. VISITS

¶1. The Mission recently reviewed two self-initiated trip requests for "four-star" Thai general officer trips to travel to CONUS. We encourage your support for the first, but not the second. (We have advised both parties that such trips are regarded as "high profile" and require IA review before they could proceed.)

a. General Boonsrang Niumpradit, Royal Thai Supreme Command Commander-in-Chief (Supreme Commander), has requested to make a CONUS trip at his own expense in early October 2007 to (1) visit Norwich University, where he first attended one year of college before entering West Point, and (2) visit West Point (USMA) in New York, where he graduated in 1971.

RATIONALE FOR ENDORSEMENT: General Boonsrang was not a key coup plotter, and has proven to be a moderating influence among the senior military leadership in Thailand since the coup. While his visit is strictly ceremonial and would not include any substantive discussions with USG, West Point, as a federally funded institution, requires OSD endorsement to grant him audience under the current policy landscape. The Mission argues that his proposed visit will not be construed as any exploitable endorsement of the coup, but rather, it will serve as a poignant reminder of the benefits that the Thai will lose should they further delay their return to a democratically elected government.

b. General Saprang Kalayanamitra, Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army under General Sonthi, would like to make an official call on offices in CONUS to seek information on bomb/explosives detection equipment, particularly in relation to airport security, as well as a potential counterpart visit with the Department of the Army. The delegation has not set a specific travel period for their proposed trip.

RATIONALE FOR NON-ENDORSEMENT: General Saprang professes a strong supporting role in the coup-related activities and likely gained his fourth star because of it. He would likely exploit this trip as tacit or even outright support for his role in the coup and higher, more influential positions in the military and politics following his retirement in September 2008. Non-endorsement of this proposed trip will send the right message that coups are not viewed as a suitable means of resolving political problems.

BOYCE